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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

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July 19, 1982

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. WILLIAM P. CLARK
THE WHITE HOUSE

SUBJECT: CPPG Meeting: Soviet Leadership Transition

The attached discussion paper responds to Robert C. McFarlane's memorandum 90499 of July 13, 1982 to Larry Eagleburger in connection with Tuesday's CPPG on the Soviet leadership transition.

L. Paul Bremer, III
L. Paul Bremer, III
Executive Secretary

Attachment:

Discussion paper

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cc: OVP - Mrs. Nancy Béarg Dyke
Treasury - Mr. David Pickford
Defense - Colonel John Stanford
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CIA -

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CPPG ISSUE PAPERSoviet Leadership TransitionSITUATION:

No conceivable Soviet succession scenario is likely to precipitate a serious immediate crisis either within the USSR or in US-Soviet relations. It is conceivable that Brezhnev will step down, be kicked upstairs, or be replaced in a pre-planned move by the collective leadership. Under these circumstances, the potential for sharp near-term conflict among Brezhnev's successors would be minimal. The potential for a sharp struggle among the leadership would be somewhat higher in the event of Brezhnev's sudden death. However, in either case the overwhelming preoccupation of the Soviet leadership will be to project an image of calm and policy continuity.

INTERESTS:

--U.S. Interests: To underscore the continuity of our policy and U.S. leadership in world affairs and avoid actions which needlessly raise tensions or convey the counter-productive impression that we are seeking to take advantage of the Soviets at a time of uncertainty and potential instability; to convey to a successor leadership the message that if there are significant positive changes in Soviet policies there will be a significant positive response from us; and to test the willingness of a successor leadership to improve relations with the U.S. on the basis of our agenda. Pressures will build for unilateral U.S. gestures to improve the relationship: these should be firmly resisted.

--Soviet Interests: To smooth the transition of power to Brezhnev's successors, ensure internal security, and avoid creating an atmosphere of crisis which could be exploited by external adversaries. The immediate period will be a time of internal adjustment as the new leaders maneuver for power, with consensus lacking for major new initiatives until their own positions are secure. Although the propaganda machine can be expected to project a "peace-loving" image, significant near-term changes in Soviet foreign and domestic policies will thus be unlikely.

--Key third party interests:

(1) U.S. Allies: We expect that our allies will wish to influence our policies toward the new leadership, and they will want us to act with restraint and to avoid any actions or statements which are likely to raise East/West tensions unduly, as they shape their own courses. The allies will

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welcome assurances of continuity in our own policy toward the Soviet Union. They may press for a return to detente and a quick summit invitation to the new Soviet leadership.

(2) Soviet allies: Brezhnev's departure will have major political repercussions in Eastern Europe, since the current leaders throughout the area, with the exception of Poland, have close and longstanding personal ties with Brezhnev. We doubt that Brezhnev's ouster or death will precipitate widespread civil disorders in Poland or elsewhere in Eastern Europe, but his successors will seek to avoid any impression of political weakness in Moscow. Soviet allies and proxies in the developing world may well minimize activities which could provoke a U.S. response until the initial stage of the Soviet leadership transition has been completed. Vis-a-vis the Soviets, they will be looking for new opportunities to press individual claims on Soviet attention and resources, but such opportunities will probably be rare, at least at the outset.

(3) Neutral/Non-Aligned: The NNA, like our allies, will be motivated by concerns for stability and avoidance of an atmosphere of East/West crisis.

CURRENT U.S. OBJECTIVES AND POLICY PLANS

Political: Our principal objective will be to make clear that we deal with the Soviet Union as a country and not with any particular leadership. We will want to emphasize that our approach to US-Soviet relations will continue to be based on the principles of reciprocity and restraint. It would be advisable to emphasize points of continuity in our relations, such as negotiations on START and INF. To underscore our world leadership, our response should be authoritatively, at Presidential level.

Should Brezhnev die in office, we would expect that his death will be marked by a Soviet state funeral. We recommend that our delegation be headed by the Vice President, rather than the President, in view of the current strains in US-Soviet relations. The delegation should include Secretary Shultz and prominent, bipartisan Congressional, business, and scientific leaders. We would, of course, want to consult closely with our allies on level of representation at the funeral.

Economic: As part of our larger response we will wish to make clear that we are prepared for a major expansion of mutually beneficial economic relations, in the context of general upward movement based on significant changes in Soviet policy. At the same time, there will be no requirement for immediate decisions on East/West economic questions.

Military: The Soviets may place some limited forces in Moscow and possibly other urban areas on increased readiness status as a contingency measure against domestic unrest.

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However, the Soviets will almost certainly avoid any unusual military activities which might provoke a U.S. reaction. We should avoid any military actions which could be seen as provocative by the Soviets or our allies, such as freedom of navigation maneuvers, which should be examined carefully on a case by case basis. Any military actions that can be considered beyond normal and could possibly evoke an other than normal response should be reviewed carefully.

Domestic/Legal Constraints: U.S. Congressional and public opinion will undoubtedly favor a restrained U.S. response which emphasizes policy continuity and our willingness to respond favorably to new signs of moderation in Soviet international behavior.

Information/Media Policy and Plans: Our information policy should be geared to our broader political objective of avoiding actions or rhetoric which would appear designed to exploit the Soviet leadership transition or needlessly exacerbate East/West tensions and of testing the new leadership's professed constructive intentions. It should be keyed to the policy line announced by the President.

SPECTRUM OF U.S. OPTIONS

--Intelligence Assets Available

Our ability to predict events before and during the Soviet political transition will be limited. We would want to make maximum use of Embassy Moscow's contacts. Our embassies in third countries, particularly those in Eastern Europe and where the Soviet Ambassador has Central Committee status will be additional sources of information. Of course, the resources of the intelligence community will have to be heavily targeted on the Soviet political transition as well as Soviet military activities. Another important source of information will be our allies with whom we would pursue an active program of intelligence sharing.

--Political/Diplomatic; Economic; Military Options Available

-- We see three broad options:

(1) Embark on a concerted effort to influence the Kremlin leadership transition process. This course of action would almost certainly be futile in view of the closed nature of the Soviet decision-making process and our limited leverage over internal political developments in the Soviet Union. We lack precise enough information about the political beliefs and potential policies of various contenders to be able to predict with any certainty how they would behave once they had succeeded Brezhnev. Even if more precise judgements on this question were possible, an attempt to favor one candidate or group over another could redound to the disadvantage of those we favored. Moreover, such an effort on our part would appear provocative to the Soviets and to our allies and friends as well.

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(2) Adopt a posture of willingness to deal, on the basis of the policy approach which we have outlined since the beginning of the Administration, with whichever leadership group emerges. We would underscore that we remain ready for an improvement in US-Soviet relations if the Soviet Union makes significant changes in policies of concern to us, and particularly policies affecting the prospects for peace. Announced by the President, this approach would stress our readiness for a reduction of tensions and progress in specific aspects of our relationship if the Soviets are prepared seriously to address the full range of our concerns. There are two possible variants: 1) a restatement of our agenda inviting new Soviet restraint in response; or 2) an elaboration of our agenda with new negotiating proposals in a few specific areas, as concrete tests of the new leadership's intentions and agility. We favor variant 1 of the option, but we recommend thorough discussion of both variants, since they represent the basic policy choices before the U.S. Government.

(3) Adopt a posture of watchful waiting. We do not favor this course, since it would dispense with the limited leverage on Soviet outcomes we do have, and since it would be seen as purely reactive and unworthy of our world leadership role.

Resources/Assets Available

--Political: In addition to Presidential-level statements and communications, we would want to carry out an extensive diplomatic dialogue with the Soviets on all outstanding issues. For example, we should be prepared to continue with the START and INF negotiations without interruption. In those cases where we have active dialogue on specific regional issues, we should indicate willingness to continue if warranted by indications of Soviet seriousness. Depending upon the timing and circumstances of the transition we might wish to consider an early Ministerial-level meeting between Secretary Shultz and the Soviet Foreign Minister. The agenda for such discussions will depend on the overall posture we adopt. We should consult closely with our Allies to ensure maximum policy coordination and unity during the transition period.

--Economic: We should not change our approach to East/West economic issues solely as a response to the Soviet political transition. However, we should make clear to the new leadership that future economic relations will depend on Soviet actions across the full range of our relationship.

--Military Forces: As noted above, U.S. and allied military forces should maintain their normal posture unless Soviet military activities dictate otherwise.

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--Covert Action: N/A

--Informational Capabilities (VOA, ICA, etc): U.S. information agencies should continue their normal operations, including those which are critical of Soviet policies, such as the occupation of Afghanistan and support of martial law in Poland. However, these agencies should conduct their operations in accordance with our overall objective of avoiding actions or rhetoric which could appear designed to exploit the Soviet political transition or needlessly raise international tensions.

For a Recommended Course of Action

--Timing Considerations: We might have some advance warning of the impending transition, although our ability to predict such developments will be limited at best. It is also possible that Brezhnev will die or be ousted with no immediate warning. Thus, contingency planning for U.S. participation in a possible state funeral as well as certain other preparations to enable us to respond promptly to a leadership change should be undertaken. For example, we should agree to prepare draft Presidential statements which could be modified as necessary when the transition occurs. To do so, we need early consideration of what our overall posture should be.

--Coordination Requirements:

--National: Consideration of our overall agenda should go forward in this forum. At the time the actual transition takes place, it may be necessary to establish a working group in the State Department to coordinate U.S. participation in a possible state funeral and other aspects of our policy during the transition. It might also be necessary to establish a special SIG/IG mechanism to coordinate the longer-term USG response to the transition.

--International: Among our first responses to a leadership change would be letters from Secretary Shultz to key allied and friendly foreign ministers providing our assessment of the situation and recommending close policy coordination. The North Atlantic Council in Brussels will be a key mechanism for continuous exchange of information and policy coordination with our European Allies. We will want to devote similar sustained attention to consultation with the Japanese and ANZUS allies, with the Chinese and with key third world countries.

Implications of Decision

--Degradation of Operational Capabilities Elsewhere: It may be necessary to shift some intelligence collection assets from other priorities to effect required close monitoring of the Soviet transition and military posture. There need be no other degradation of operational capabilities elsewhere.

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--Political Impact:

(1) International: Our ability to bring about a coordinated and restrained Western response to the transition will be a key in our ability to induce Soviet international restraint and to convince the new leadership that its interest lies in adopting a more moderate course.

(2) Domestic: There will be pressures on us both from those who would advocate an appeal to Soviet "doves" and those who would argue for an aggressive posture toward the Soviet Union during its leadership transition. However, as stated above, we believe the vast majority of the Congress and the American people will support a statesmanlike posture stressing the continuity of U.S. policy.

--Economic Impact: As noted above, we would not expect that existing trade and economic relationships, e.g. grain sales, would be affected by either the Soviet transition or our response to it.

--Security Requirements: Certain domestic groups might seize upon a transition as a pretext for demonstrations or even violent activity against the Soviet diplomatic or commercial presence in the U.S. Should this happen, the Soviets might retaliate against our personnel and facilities in the Soviet Union. We should be prepared to take such measures as are necessary to fulfill our obligations to provide appropriate protection. We otherwise anticipate no increased security threat to our personnel and facilities in the Soviet Union as a result of the transition.

Legislative Coordination Requirements:

As early as possible following the announcement of Brezhnev's death or ouster, we should brief the House and Senate leadership on our assessments of the succession. Secretary Shultz might wish to testify in open session before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and/or the House Foreign Affairs Committee on our approach to US-Soviet relations in the transition period. However, in our contacts with Congress, we should avoid public speculation on the details of the leadership struggle or premature judgements on the policies of the new leaders.

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CPPG Issue Paper

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